CAMWS

Herakles and Greek Dioskouroi Legends

Author(s): Alexander Haggerty Krappe

Source: *The Classical Journal*, May, 1923, Vol. 18, No. 8 (May, 1923), pp. 502-504

Published by: The Classical Association of the Middle West and South, Inc. (CAMWS)

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3289120

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

The Classical Association of the Middle West and South, Inc. (CAMWS) is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Classical Journal*

JSTOR

Notes

HERAKLES AND GREEK DIOSKOUROI LEGENDS

After the researches of Eitrem[1] and Harris[2] which have shed new light on the origin and frequency of Dioskouroi Myths in Ancient Greece, the following facts may be considered as established.

1. The Dioscuric twins, though of great likeness, are none the less differentiated, often to such a degree that the one may be considered the counterpart of the other.[3]

2. They are apt to have the same mother but different fathers, one of whom is divine, the other mortal.

3. They are warlike and go to battle together. Their enemies are apt to be another twin couple.[4] The outcome is generally tragic.

4. At any rate, one of them proves mortal, while the other is a god and immortal.

It has never, to my knowledge, been brought out that in the light of these facts the hero Herakles may appear in a new aspect. In the following pages I shall endeavor to show that in the cycle of legends which centre around this famous character of the heroic age a number point to Dioscuric origin and shall prove that at least one of the roots of the cycle goes back to ancient superstitions connected with twin births.

In some of the oldest versions which have come down to us, Herakles and Iphikles are twins, born by Alkmene.[5] The father of Herakles is Zeus, that of his twin brother Alkmene's husband, King Amphitryon. Soon after his birth Herakles reveals himself as the son of the god; for he kills two enormous snakes who had put Iphikles to flight. In spite of this difference in strength and courage

[1] S. Eitrem, *Die göttlichen Zwillinge bei den Griechen*, Christiania, 1902, *Videnskabsselskabets Skrifter, II. Historisk-filos. Klasse*, No. 2.

[2] J. R. Harris, *The Dioscuri in the Christian Legends*, London, 1903; *The Cult of the Heavenly Twins*, Cambridge, 1906; *Boanerges*, Cambridge, 1913.

[3] Harris, *Cult*, p. 45; *Boanerges*, pp. 159; 308; 336; 417.

[4] Eitrem, pp. 7; 42 ff.; Harris, *Cult*, pp. 44; 139; *Boanerges*, p. 224.

[5] Hesiod, *Shield of Hercules*, 27-56; Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* IV. 9; Schol. on *Il.* XIV. 323 and *Od.* XI. 266; Tzetz. *Lyk.* 33; Hyg. *Fab.* 29.

the two brothers go to war with the Hippokoontides, likewise twins.[6] The cause of this war is reported to have been the following. The Hippokoontides had taken sides with Neleus in a war made by Herakles on the latter, and had killed the son of Likymnios, Herakles' cousin. This hero had hit a dog of the Hippokoontides with a stone and had thereupon been killed by them. Now the Hippokoontides, as their name indicates, sons of Hippokoon, are Lakedaimonian twins who were also said to have fought against the Dioskouroi; for Plutarch narrates[7] that Enarsphoros, son of Hippokoon, was suspected of intending to violate Helen. It is also to be noted that after the death of the Hippokoontides Herakles restores the kingdom to Tyndareos, the father of Kastor and Polydeukes, who had been driven out by Hippokoon and his sons.[8] The battle between Herakles and Iphikles on one hand and the Hippokoontides on the other ends with the death of the latter and Iphikles, Herakles' mortal twin brother. Moreover, Herakles receives a wound at the κοτύλη,[9] which in many legendary cycles, Hellenic and non-Hellenic, turns out to be fatal.[10] Above all, it is the very kind of wound which is inflicted upon Kastor in his battle against King Aphidnos.[11]

The Hippokoontides are however not the only twin couple fought by Herakles. Apollodoros tells us that when the hero marched against Augeias the latter sent against him an army led by Eurytos and Kteatos, sons of Aktor and Molione, said to have been born from an egg, just as the Spartan Dioskouroi,[12] and in their origin evidently a pair of Siamese twins.[13] Herakles at first suffers a defeat, but later he waylays and kills them.[14]

Apollonios Rhodios in his *Argonautica* reports another fight of

[6] Eitrem, *op. cit.* pp. 19-23; Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 7. 3; Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* IV. 33. 5 ff.; Pausanias, *Descr. Gr.* II. 18. 7; III. 10. 6; III. 15. 3-6; III. 19. 7; VIII. 53. 9.

[7] *Vit. parall., Theseus,* 31.

[8] Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 7. 3; III. 10. 5; Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* IV. 33. 5; Pausanias, *Descr. Gr.* II. 18. 7; III. 1. 4 f.; III. 21. 4; Schol. on Eurip. *Orest.* 457; Schol. on *Il.* II. 581.

[9] Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 7. 3.

[10] S. Wide, *Lakonische Kulte,* Leipzig, 1893, p. 322. Cf. the death wound of Alexandros-Paris, of King Arthur and of the fisher-king in the Grail romances.

[11] Wide, *op. cit.,* p. 187.

[12] Athenaeus, *Deipn.* II. 50; Eitrem, p. 12.

[13] Schol. *Il.* XI. 709; cf. also Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 7. 2.

[14] Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 7. 2.

Herakles against a Dioscuric couple, Zetes and Kalais, sons of Boreas and Orithyia.[15] He kills them because they had persuaded the Argonauts to leave him behind in Mysia.

Apollodoros relates how Herakles, desiring to establish an oracle of his own, carried off the sacred tripod of Delphoi. Then Apollo fought him, but Zeus separated the two by a thunderbolt.[16] It is almost certain that Apollo was a twin divinity even before his union with Artemis at Delos.[17] But leaving aside the arguments advanced to support this theory, precisely the same episode of a duel between the god and one hero of a twin couple is told by Homer[18] and Apollodoros.[19] I refer to the fight of Apollo and Idas, the twin brother of Lynkeus, just as Herakles is the twin brother of Iphikles, and just as Zeus separates Apollo and Herakles, so he stops the duel of Apollo and Idas.[20] It is then certain that Herakles and Idas are parallel figures and that Apollo was introduced later into both twin legends, for reasons which we can hardly surmise, but which are evidently connected with Apollo's own Dioscuric character.

Without trying to explain the origin and development of all these twin myths, which we shall probably never be able to judge with any degree of certainty, the historic facts being unknown, we may say that Herakles, at an early stage, was one of a Dioscuric couple. He outstripped his twin brother in much the same way in which at Rome Kastor outstripped Pollux, but the original features of his twin character are still clearly discernible.

ALEXANDER HAGGERTY KRAPPE

FLAT RIVER, MO.

[15] Apollon. Rh. *Argon.* I. 1298-1308; Apollod. *Bibl.* III. 15. *2*; Hyg. *Fab.* 14.

[16] Apollod. *Bibl.* II. 6. *2.*

[17] Harris, *Cult,* p. 139; *Boanerges,* p. 319.

[18] *Il.* IX. 564 ff.

[19] *Bibl.* I. 7. 8-9.

[20] *Ibid.*

HECTOR AS A POETIC CREATION

There is an interesting parallel in very recent literature for the hypothesis developed by Professor Scott in his *The Unity of Homer* that Hector was an imaginary character, created to add moral dignity to the story, and also to furnish a champion of sufficient valor to enhance the glory of Achilles.